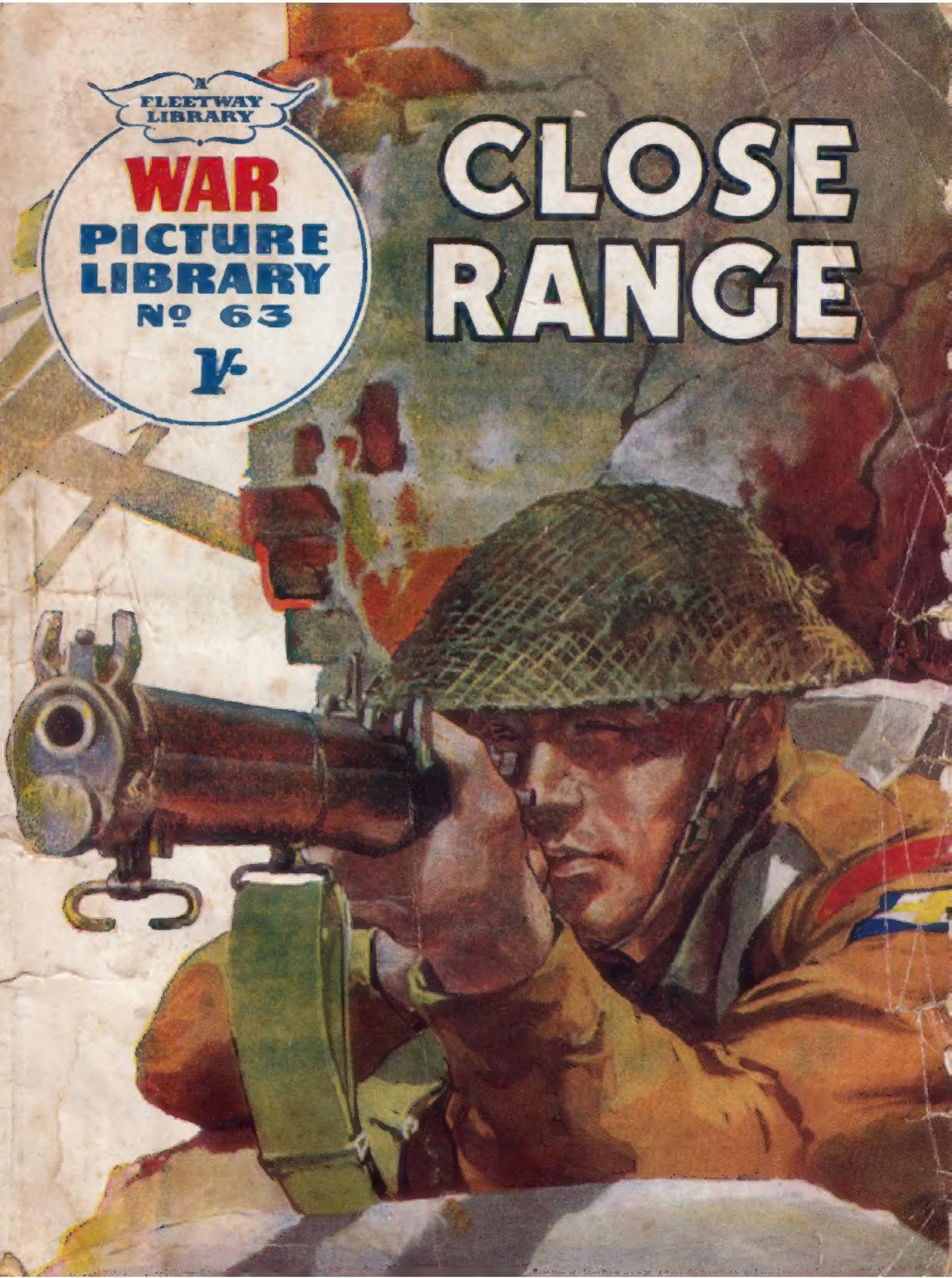


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V

# CLOSE RANGE



Through the pounding flak of the savage enemy sky,  
and then . . .

## **BOMBS GONE !**



For tingling excitement, don't miss

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# CLOSE RANGE



M1C 39

SPRING, 1944. THE UNITED KINGDOM WAS AN ARMED CAMP. THE MIGHT OF THE ALLIED FORCES WAS CONCENTRATED IN THE UNCONQUERABLE ISLAND, READY FOR THE DESPERATE LEAP ON TO THE CONTINENT OF NAZI-HELD EUROPE. EVERYWHERE ALLIED FRONT LINE UNITS WERE BEING BROUGHT TO THE PEAK OF FITNESS AND THEN QUIETLY MOVED TOWARDS THE INVASION PORTS. THE FREE WORLD WAS READY TO MARCH . . .



## Chapter 1. Crippled Marksman

AMONGST THE UNITS UNDERGOING A CRUELLY RUGGED TRAINING THAT WOULD HAVE BROKEN THE HEARTS AND BODIES OF MEN LESS TOUGH, WAS THE 4TH. DARTSHIRES . . .



AND OF ALL THE FIGHTING MEN IN THE DARTSHIRES, NONE WAS KEENER TO GET TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY THAN PRIVATE DAVE WARREN . . .



BUT ON THAT APRIL DAY, DISASTER  
OVERTOOK HIM . . . HE HAD SURMOUNTED  
THE FIFTEEN FOOT WALL WITH  
SOMETHING APPROACHING EASE . . .  
THEN AS HE HIT THE GROUND, SEARING  
AGONY SHOT THROUGH HIS RIGHT  
ANKLE . . .

AAGH!  
HECK . . .  
MY ANKLE'S  
GONE!



ON SICK PARADE THE  
NEXT DAY, THE M.O.  
GENTLY PROBED THE  
SWOLLEN ANKLE . . .

YOU'VE BROKEN A BONE  
HERE, MY BOY. I'M  
SENDING YOU FOR AN  
X-RAY . . . IT MAY  
BE SERIOUS!

OH NO!  
I DON'T WANT TO  
GET CROCKED NOW,  
WITH D-DAY  
COMING UP  
ANY TIME!



## Close Range

DAVE WAS SENT TO HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT, AND WITHIN A MONTH, TO HIS SHOCKED DISMAY, A MEDICAL BOARD HAD DOWNGRADED HIM TO CATEGORY B 2.

THE FOOLS SAY I'M NOT FIT FOR COMBATANT DUTY, THEY'VE DISCOVERED I SPEAK GERMAN, SO I'M BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE PIONEER CORPS AND SENT TO A P.O.W. CAMP AS AN INTERPRETER! ME! . . . A MARKSMAN AND A TRAINED SNIPER!



LUMME, YOU'RE LUCKY! IT SOUNDS LIKE A REAL CUSHY BOMB-PROOF JOB! PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT, DAVE, AND YOU'LL HAVE AN EASY WAR.



DAVE SHRUGGED HELPLESSLY. HOW COULD HE EXPLAIN TO THESE MEN THAT HE WANTED TO FIGHT! HIS FATHER HAD BEEN A SERGEANT-MAJOR IN THE '14-'18 WAR, AND HE, DAVE, HAD BEEN BORN IN GERMANY WHEN HIS FATHER HAD BEEN IN THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION. SOLDIERING WAS IN HIS BLOOD.

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, DAVE FOUND THE LIFE IN THE OFFICERS' P.O.W. CAMP DEADLY DULL. HE WAS EATING HIS HEART OUT, LONGING FOR ACTION, PAINFULLY AWARE THAT THE INVASION WAS IMMINENT.

WHAT A JOB FOR A FIGHTING SOLDIER!



THEN CAME D-DAY... THE GREATEST MILITARY OPERATION THE WORLD HAD EVER KNOWN. THIS WAS THE DAY THE WORLD HAD BEEN WAITING FOR... THE NAZI WORLD WITH FEAR, THE FREE WORLD WITH HOPE.



## Close Range

AND ALL DAVE WARREN COULD DO WAS READ ABOUT IT IN THE SPARSELY WORDED OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUES. BUT IN HIS MIND, DAVE COULD SEE IT ALL . . .



THEN CAME THE DAY WHEN DAVE WENT TO LONDON ON LEAVE. IN THE TRAIN HE GOT TALKING TO A SERGEANT OF THE 2ND. ROCKLAND REGIMENT, WHO, LIKE HIMSELF, WORE THE CROSSED RIFLES ON HIS SLEEVE.



GLUMLY, DAVE TOLD HIS STORY BUT THE SERGEANT SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN BOASTING OF HIS OWN EXPERIENCES.

I'M ON MY WAY TO A STAGING CAMP NEAR PORTSMOUTH, AND I'M TAKING A DRAFT OUT TO THE ROCKLANDS. SEEMS THAT THE BATTALION HAS FORMED A SPECIALIST SNIPER AND SCOUT SECTION, AND I'M TAKING IT OVER.



AT PADDINGTON, DAVE AND THE SERGEANT WENT TO A CAFE IN A SIDE STREET FOR A MEAL. DURING IT, THEY HEARD A RAPIDLY APPROACHING SINISTER BUZZING SOUND . . . WHICH STOPPED SUDDENLY WHEN IT WAS OVERHEAD . . .



## Close Range

DAVE HEARD A HIGH-PITCHED, GROWING WHINE. THEN CAME A BLINDING FLASH, A CRASH LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD . . . AND BLACKNESS!



DAVE CAME TO A FEW SECONDS LATER. HE WAS IN TOTAL DARKNESS AND FIGHTING FOR BREATH WITH FUME AND DUST-CHOKED LUNGS. HE SWITCHED ON HIS TORCH, AND SAW THE SERGEANT HALF BURIED UNDER THE DEBRIS OF THE BUILDING WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE COLLAPSED UPON THEM.



## Close Range

FIGHTING DOWN RISING FEELINGS OF PANIC, DAVE CLAWED THE DEBRIS AWAY FROM THE STILL FIGURE OF THE SERGEANT, AND AT LAST DRAGGED HIM FREE. ONLY THEN DID HE DISCOVER THAT HIS FRANTIC LABOURS HAD ALL BEEN IN VAIN.

THE POOR BLOKE'S HAD IT!



NO SOUND PENETRATED THE PILED UP DEBRIS. IT WAS JUST AS IF HE WAS ENTOMBED. SPURRED ON BY DESPERATION, DAVE TORE AT THE RUBBLE TILL HIS FINGERS WERE BLEEDING AND HE WAS ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE. SUDDENLY HE HEARD A FAINT METALLIC KNOCKING AND SCRAPING, AND HIS HEART LEAPED WITH RENEWED HOPE.

A RESCUE SQUAD! . . . AND THEY DON'T SOUND SO VERY FAR OFF, EITHER!



## Close Range

HE SLUMPED DOWN TO AWAIT RESCUE . . .  
AND THEN THE GREAT IDEA CAME TO DAVE . . .

HE'S SERGEANT D.L. GAULT. HE TOLD ME HE HADN'T GOT ANY RELATIVES, OR ANYONE WHO CARED IF HE LIVED OR DIED. I'M IN THE SAME BOAT. NO PARENTS. NO ONE. HE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE IN THE UNIT HE'S GOING TO.  
SUPPOSE I TOOK HIS PLACE?



FINGERS FUMBLING WITH EXCITEMENT, HE HURRIEDLY BEGAN TO CHANGE UNIFORMS WITH THE SERGEANT . . .

I'LL BE FOUND OUT IN THE END, OF COURSE, BUT IF I CAN GET AWAY WITH IT LONG ENOUGH TO GET TO FRANCE FOR A FEW WEEKS, I SHAN'T MIND.



WHEN THE RESCUERS FINALLY BROKE THROUGH, THEY FOUND A DAZED, EXHAUSTED 'SERGEANT', AND A DEAD 'PRIVATE'.

ALL RIGHT, MATE . . . NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT NOW!



OUTSIDE AN AMBULANCE WAS WAITING . . .

THANKS, BUT I'M OKAY. ALL I NEED IS A CLEAN UP AND A BIT OF PLASTER AT A FIRST AID POST, AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY.

ARE YOU SURE, SERGEANT?

THE LAST THING DAVE WANTED WAS TO GO TO HOSPITAL. THE SOONER HE GOT OUT OF ENGLAND THE LESS THE DANGER OF HIS IMPERSONATION BEING FOUND OUT.

NEXT MORNING 'SERGEANT GAULT' REPORTED TO THE STAGING CAMP, AND THREE DAYS AFTER THAT HE LED A DRAFT ASHORE AT THE MULBERRY HARBOUR ON THE NORMANDY COAST

WELL, I'VE GOT AWAY WITH IT SO FAR! IF MY LUCK HOLDS, I'M BOUND TO SEE ACTION NOW!

## Close Range

THE ALLIES, AFTER WEEKS OF HARD FIGHTING, HELD THE CHERBOURG PENINSULAR AND A BIG BITE OF NORMANDY, AND WERE GATHERING THEIR STRENGTH FOR THE BREAK-OUT. BUT IN THE THICK HEDGEROWS OF THAT COUNTRYSIDE, THE BRITISH WERE TEMPORARILY PINNED DOWN BEFORE THE VILLAGE OF CRAMONT.



IN BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS A LEAN, STEEL-EYED BRIGADIER WAS MAKING PLANS FOR CAPTURING THIS ENEMY STRONGHOLD.



WELL PUT THE  
ROCKLANDS AT IT. THEY'RE  
THE BOYS FOR CRACKING A  
HARD NUT LIKE THIS, THEY'LL  
HAVE TO RECONNOITRE IT  
THOROUGHLY FIRST.

AT THAT MOMENT, THE BATTLE-HARDENED FIGHTERS OF THE 2ND. ROCKLANDS WERE IN RESERVE, AND LICKING THEIR WOUNDS AFTER BEING IN THE THICK OF THE MURDEROUS FIGHTING . . .



IN BATTALION H.Q. THE COMMANDING OFFICER WAS DISCUSSING AN ITEM OF BAD NEWS WITH HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND, MAJOR MORGAN.

AS IF WE HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH TROUBLE ALREADY! NOW THEY ARE SENDING US THAT SERGEANT GAULT, FROM THE FIRST BATTALION. REMEMBER ABOUT HIM?



SOMEONE HAS GOT TO HAVE HIM . . . WE'RE UNLUCKY!



## Close Range

THE NEWS OF THE FORTHCOMING ARRIVAL OF THE NEW SERGEANT HAD ALREADY SPREAD ON THE BATTALION GRAPEVINE, AND THE TOUGH MARKSMEN IN THE NEWLY FORMED SNIPER SECTION TOOK IT GLUMLY.

I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS BLOKE, GAULT, FROM A PAL OF MINE IN THE FIRST BATTALION. AND A RIPE PERISHER HE IS BY ALL ACCOUNTS!



AT THE NAME, 'GAULT', A BLISTERING EXCLAMATION BROKE FROM ONE OF THE MEN WHO HAD JUST JOINED THE GROUP, AND HE STEPPED FORWARD. JACK CALSHOTT WAS A TALL, GAUNT, HAWKLIKE MAN, WITH SHOULDERING BLACK EYES AND THE FACE OF A RED INDIAN CHIEF.



LATER WHEN CALSHOTT HAD GONE . . .

DID YOU SEE THE  
LOOK IN OLD JACK'S  
EYES THEN ? I WOULDN'T  
BE IN GAULT'S SHOES IF  
JACK HAS IT  
IN FOR HIM !



THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON 'SERGEANT GAULT' ARRIVED, AND WHEN HE REPORTED TO BATTALION H.Q. HE SENSED FROM THE C.O.'S ICY MANNER THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG . . .

WE HAVE HAD A REPORT OF YOU FROM YOUR PREVIOUS UNIT, SERGEANT, AND WE KNOW YOUR RECORD . I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT I DEMAND THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARD FROM MY N.C.O.'S !

YES,  
SIR !



AS SOON AS 'GAULT' WAS OUT OF EARSHOT THE MAJOR TURNED TO THE C.O. . . .

WHY NOT LET ME TAKE HIM WITH MY RECCE PARTY INTO CRAMONT TONIGHT, SIR? IF HE'S WHAT THEY SAY HE IS, IT'LL GIVE US A LEGITIMATE EXCUSE FOR GETTING RID OF HIM.

YES. WE MIGHT AS WELL TEST HIM OUT RIGHT AWAY.



IN THE MEANTIME, DAVE HAD FOUND THE SNIPER SECTION. NEVER HAVING BEEN AN N.C.O., IT WAS A STRANGE PART HE HAD TO PLAY, BUT HE HAD INHERITED THE KNACK OF LEADERSHIP FROM HIS FATHER AND HE SUPPRESSED HIS QUALEMS.

YOU DON'T KNOW ME AND I DON'T KNOW YOU, SO FIRST I'M GOING TO CALL THE ROLL . . . GIVE ME THE SECTION ROSTER, CORPORAL!



IT WAS WHEN HE CAME TO THE NAME, 'CALSHOTT', THAT DAVE RAN INTO HIS FIRST SNAG . . .

MY NAME MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU - SERGEANT ?

H'MM ! SEEMS TO RING A BELL .

DAVE WAS PLAYING FOR TIME, WONDERING IF HE OUGHT TO HAVE RECOGNISED THE MAN .

CALSHOTT'S EYES WERE COLD AND DAVE SENSED AN UGLY UNDERCURRENT IN THE MAN'S VOICE .

RING A BELL, SERGEANT ? IT OUGHT TO SEEING THAT MY BROTHER WAS UNDER YOU IN SICILY !

I'VE HAD A LOT OF MEN UNDER ME. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE NAME OF EVERY ONE.

THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG . . . WHAT WAS IT EVERYBODY SEEMED TO HAVE AGAINST HIM ?

## Chapter 2. ACTION AT LAST

THAT NIGHT MAJOR MORGAN BRIEFED THE RECONNAISSANCE PATROL . . .

OUR JOB IS TO PINPOINT THE POSITION OF THE MORTARS AND MACHINE-GUNS THAT ARE DOING ALL THE DAMAGE, AND TO FIND A COVERED WAY OF APPROACH WHEN THE BIG ATTACK STARTS IN A DAY OR TWO.



FINALLY THE MAJOR TURNED TO DAVE AND THERE WAS A FLINTY QUALITY IN HIS LOOK . . .

WE'LL GO IN SINGLE FILE AND I WANT YOU RIGHT ON MY HEELS, SERGEANT! STICK CLOSE.



## Close Range

19

LATER, WHEN THE FILE OF MEN EDGED THEIR WAY ACROSS THE WIDE NO-MAN'S-LAND, DAVE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE MAJOR TO TOUCH HIM. THE ONLY SOUNDS WERE THE OCCASIONAL WHIPLASH CRACK OF A RIFLE, AND THE PLAINTIVE WHISTLE OF A SOLITARY MORTAR SHELL.



THEY WERE NEARING THE EDGE OF A SMALL COPSE WHEN DAVE'S KEEN EYES SPOTTED A SLIGHT MOVEMENT. HIS HAND REACHED OUT FOR THE MAJOR'S SHOULDER AND HE WHISPERED A WARNING.



## Close Range

DEATHLY SILENT, THE TOUGH MAJOR AND THE BOGUS SERGEANT CREEPT UP BEHIND THEIR QUARRY. FINDING A TELEPHONE LINE, THEY CUT IT . . . THEN THEY SPRANG!



IN A FEW VIOLENT SECONDS THE GERMANS WERE FELLED . . .

AS THE PATROL MOVED ON, DAVE'S BLOOD TINGLED WITH FIERCE EXCITEMENT. HE HAD BEEN IN ACTION AND HAD STRUCK HIS FIRST BLOW AT THE ENEMY . . .

THE LINE OF MEN SLIPPED QUIETLY BETWEEN TWO MACHINE-GUN POSTS, SKIRTED A LIGHT ANTI-TANK BATTERY . . . AND STILL THE MAJOR PRESSED ON INTO THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE.



INDEED, THE OVER-BOLD PATROL WAS  
ALREADY UNDER OBSERVATION FROM  
A WATCHFUL AND CUNNING ENEMY . . .



ALL UNSUSPECTING, MAJOR MORGAN WAS GIVING DAVE FURTHER ORDERS THAT WOULD  
TEST THE COURAGE OF ANY MAN . . .



## Close Range

DAVE SLID CAUTIOUSLY FORWARD, BUT HE HAD NOT GONE FAR WHEN SOME SIXTH SENSE PROMPTED HIM TO LOOK BACK. HE GAVE A GASP OF DISMAY, FOR HE SAW SHADOWS WERE MOVING STEALTHILY BEHIND THE PATROL.



INSTANTLY HE DARTED BACK TO THE WAITING, IMPATIENT MAJOR . . .



THE STACCATO CHATTER OF A SCHMEISSER SUDDENLY SPLIT THE NIGHT, AND A STREAM OF BULLETS WHINED AND CRACKED VICIOUSLY ABOUT THEM . . .  
**BULLETS THAT CAME FROM THE REAR!**



RAW FEAR MADE DAVE'S MOUTH GO DRY BUT HE SWIFTLY GOT CONTROL OF HIMSELF AS THE MAJOR RIPPED OUT A CURT ORDER.

WE FIGHT OUR WAY BACK, MEN! IF YOU'RE HIT, DROP AND TAKE COVER. NO ONE CAN STOP TO HELP YOU!



## Close Range

DASHING FROM COVER TO COVER, THE PATROL DREW CLOSER TO THE LINE OF GERMANS WHO BARRED THEIR WAY, . . . MOVING DOGGEDLY INTO THE TUMBLEDOWN STREET WHERE RIFLES AND MACHINE-GUNS SPURTED FLAME AT THEM.



THE MOMENT THEY WERE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE,  
THE MAJOR GAVE HIS FINAL ORDER . . .



## Close Range

25

THE MAJOR SPRANG TO HIS FEET, AND HIS MEN FOLLOWED HIM IN ONE MAD, DESPERATE CHARGE . . .



DEATH SCREAMED PAST DAVE IN A HAIL OF BULLETS, BUT HE WAS UNTouched AND HE WENT IN WITH HIS BAYONET GLEAMING WICKEDLY BEFORE HIM IN THE DIM LIGHT . . .

AAGH!



## Close Range

ONE MOMENT IT WAS HACK AND THRUST WITH GERMANS ALL ROUND AND THE NEXT, DAVE FOUND THE WAY AHEAD SUDDENLY CLEAR AND HE RAN ON INTO THE NIGHT, UNTIL HE STUMBLED OVER A LENGTH OF TELEPHONE WIRE.



EVEN AS HE LAY STUNNED BY THE HEAVY FALL, A PARTY OF GERMANS CLATTERED PAST ONLY A FEW FEET AWAY.



THE SOUNDS OF FIRING HAD DIED AWAY. NOT ANOTHER GERMAN OR MEMBER OF HIS OWN ILL-FATED PATROL PASSED THAT WAY, SO MOVING WARILY, DAVE SLIPPED INTO NO-MAN'S-LAND . . .



AS SOON AS HE REACHED HIS OWN LINES, 'SERGEANT GAULT' REPORTED TO BATTALION H.Q., WHERE THE C.O. QUESTIONED HIM.

AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE TO GET BACK, SERGEANT?

SO IT SEEMS, SIR.



EVEN WHILE HE WAS GIVING VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENEMY DEFENCES IN CRAMONT, DAVE SENSED THE SUSPICION IN THE COLONEL'S MANNER.

...AND THIS IS THE BEST AVENUE OF APPROACH, SIR. THERE'S A ROAD BLOCK HERE, BUT A WIDE GAP BY THIS LITTLE ORCHARD...



## Close Range

WHEN DAVE HAD GONE, THE COLONEL VOICED HIS THOUGHTS TO THE ADJUTANT . . .

TWO OFFICERS AND NINETEEN MEN MISSING . . . THAT'S A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR THIS INFORMATION! I'M AFRAID THE FACT THAT GAULT IS THE ONLY SURVIVOR SEEMS TO BEAR OUT WHAT WE'VE ALREADY HEARD ABOUT HIM!



UTTERLY EXHAUSTED, DAVE LIMPED TO HIS TENT, WHERE HE FELL ASLEEP AS THOUGH POLE-AXED. HE DID NOT WAKE TILL THE AFTERNOON, AND SOON AFTERWARDS CALSHOTT CAME OVER TO HIM . . .

WELL, SARGE,  
SO YOU'RE UP TO  
YOUR OLD GAMES  
AGAIN, EH?



THERE WAS INSOLENCE AND COLD, IMPLACABLE HOSTILITY IN CALSHOTT'S TONE.

DAVE CAME TO HIS FEET, HIS JAW SET GRIMLY. AS FAR AS ANYONE KNEW, HE WAS A SERGEANT. . . AND HE WAS GOING TO ACT LIKE ONE!

YOU KNOW ALL RIGHT! EVERYONE ELSE GETS KILLED EXCEPT YOU. YOU **ALWAYS** COME BACK.

YOU'D BETTER WATCH YOUR MANNER, CALSHOTT, OR YOU'LL BE IN DEAD TROUBLE! ANYWAY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT



CALSHOTT GLANCED AROUND TO MAKE SURE NO ONE WAS WITHIN HEARING, AND THEN STEPPED CLOSE TO DAVE. HIS EYES WERE BLAZING, HIS VOICE COLD WITH HATE.

YOU PLAYED THE SAME TRICK IN SICILY! YOU WERE ON PATROL, AND DESERTED YOUR MEN WHEN THE GERMANS ATTACKED. YOUR MEN WERE ALL KILLED . . . YOU SAVED YOUR SKIN, I KNOW . . . BECAUSE MY BROTHER WAS ONE OF THEM!



WELL, YOUR TURN  
WILL COME, GAULT  
. . . AND WHEN IT  
DOES . . . I'LL  
BE THERE!

CALSHOTT TURNED AWAY AND DAVE REALISED WITH HORROR THAT HE HAD TAKEN ON THE IDENTITY OF A MAN WHO HAD BEEN A DESPICABLE COWARD!

*Chapter 3.* NAZI TRAP

TWO DAYS LATER THE EARTH SHOOK TO THE THUNDER OF HUNDREDS OF GUNS, WHILST HEAVY BOMBERS ROARED OVERHEAD AND OBLITERATED ENEMY POSITIONS IN THE MOST MERCLESS CARPET BOMBING OF THE WAR. THEN ALLIED INFANTRY AND TANKS WENT FORWARD . . . AND THE BATTLE OF THE BREAK-OUT HAD BEGUN!



THREE COMPANIES OF ROCKLANDS TOOK CRAMONT AFTER TWO HOURS OF FIERCE FIGHTING; THEN 'A' COMPANY LED BY CAPTAIN 'LOONY' LOMAX, WENT THROUGH WITH A SQUADRON OF TANKS. WITH 'A' WENT DAVE AND CALSHOTT . . .

CAPTAIN LOMAX IS  
THE RIGHT BLOKE FOR THIS  
SORT OF CAPER. HE DIDN'T  
GET CALLED 'LOONY'  
FOR NOTHING!



FROM THE START OF THE ATTACK JACK CALSHOTT HAD KEPT CLOSE TO 'SERGEANT GAULT', SILENT, GRIM-LIPPED . . . A MAN BIDING HIS TIME!



## Close Range

FOUR MILES BEYOND CRAMONT, IN FRONT OF THE BRIDGE AT BUCY-LE-BOIS, THE TANKS WERE SUDDENLY HALTED BY DEADLY FIRE FROM GERMAN 88'S, WHilst A MURDEROUS MACHINE-GUN CROSSFIRE MADE 'A' COMPANY DIG IN.



'LOONY' LOMAX HASTILY ISSUED NEW ORDERS . . .



TANKS OR NO TANKS,  
WE'VE GOT TO GRAB THAT  
BRIDGE BEFORE THE GERMANS  
BLOW IT UP. A BIG ARMoured  
COLUMN IS SCHEDULED TO  
CROSS IT AT TEN O'CLOCK  
TOMORROW MORNING . . .  
**SO IT'S GOT TO BE  
IN ONE PIECE!**

EVEN AS HE SPOKE, GERMAN GUNS RANGED ACCURATELY ON THE BRIDGE'S APPROACHES AND CAPTAIN LOMAX WAS ONE OF THE FIRST CASUALTIES . . .



A WITHERING HAIL OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE FROM THE LEFT FLANK SWEPT UP THE SUNKEN ROAD, TURNING IT INTO A DEATH TRAP, AND LIEUTENANT HOLT, THE SECOND-IN-COMMAND, ORDERED THE WITHDRAWAL.



## Close Range

OUTFLANKED AND OUTNUMBERED, 'A' COMPANY WAS FORCED TO WITHDRAW FOUR HUNDRED YARDS. THERE THEY DUG THEIR FOX-HOLES AGAIN . . .



BUT ALREADY THE GERMAN GUNS WERE SEARCHING HUNGRILY FOR THEM... AND FROM THE NEW POSITION THEY COULD NO LONGER SEE THE VITAL BRIDGE, OR STOP THE ENEMY FROM BLOWING IT UP.

SOON THE GERMANS WERE PLASTERING THE COPSE WITH EVERY AVAILABLE WEAPON, AND THROUGH THE WHINE AND CRASH OF SHELLS AND MORTAR BOMBS, THERE CAME A CRY FROM THE LIEUTENANT THAT BROUGHT DAVE OVER TO HIM . . .

YOU'RE SENIOR N.C.O. NOW, GAULT, TRY TO FIND ANOTHER POSITION . . . THAT COMMANDS THE BRIDGE. GOT . . . TO KEEP THE JERRIES FROM BLOWING THE BRIDGE!



AS DAVE DIVED BACK INTO HIS FOX-HOLE A HARSH, SARDONIC LAUGH BROKE FROM JACK CALSHOTT . . .

SO YOU'RE IN COMMAND NOW EH, SERGEANT! WHAT A BREAK FOR JERRY!

THAT'S ENOUGH, CALSHOTT . . . KEEP THAT RIFLE WORKING!



THE GERMAN BARRAGE LIFTED A LITTLE, BUT THE SELLING WAS STILL HEAVY WHEN DAVE SUDDENLY LEFT HIS FOXHOLE . . .

HANG ON, BOYS!  
I'VE GOT AN IDEA . . .  
I'LL BE BACK!



AS DAVE RAN BACK TOWARDS THE COVER OF A DEEP DITCH NEARBY, A BLISTERING OATH RIPPED FROM CALSHOTT'S THIN LIPS . . .

THERE HE GOES AGAIN . . .  
THE YELLOW THREE STRIPER!  
HANG ON!' HE SAYS AND  
THEN THE FLIPPING COWARD  
DUCKS OUT, JUST LIKE  
HE DID BEFORE!



## Close Range

SOMETHING SNAPPED IN CALSHOTT'S BRAIN. HIS EYES BLAZED, AND HE FLUNG THE RIFLE TO HIS SHOULDER . . .

DON'T BE A CRAZY FOOL, JACK!  
PACK IT UP!

BY HEAVENS!  
IT'S TIME SOMEONE  
GAVE GAULT WHAT'S  
COMING TO HIM!  
IF THE GERMANS  
WON'T . . .  
I WILL!

THE SOLDIER'S URGENT SHOUT REACHED CALSHOTT'S INFLAMED MIND AND RELUCTANT SANITY CAME TO HIM. HE LOWERED HIS RIFLE.

THAT'S THE STUFF, MATE!  
MURDER IS THE ONE THING  
THEY STILL SHOOT YOU  
FOR . . . AND  
GAULT'S NOT  
WORTH IT!

DAVE, UNAWARE OF HIS NARROW ESCAPE, AND WITH ONE IDEA HAMMERING IN HIS BRAIN, WAS WORKING HIS WAY UNDER COVER TO THE TOP OF A HIGH KNOB . . .

IF I CAN GET A  
FEW MEN IN  
POSITION ON THAT  
HILL, WE MAY BE  
ABLE TO SWEEP  
THE BRIDGE WITH  
FIRE . . . AND  
KEEP JERRY OFF!

## Close Range

37

PANTING FROM THE CLIMB, DAVE REACHED THE CREST AND SAW THAT A SMALL PARTY OF GERMAN SAPPERS WAS ALREADY AT WORK ON THE BRIDGE . . .



HIS ESTIMATE OF THE RANGE WAS EXACT AND THE VERY FIRST SHOT FOUND ITS TARGET . . .



## Close Range

AS ONE MAN, THE GERMANS DIVED FOR COVER BUT DAVE GOT TWO MORE BEFORE THEY REACHED IT . . .



TENSE, MOTIONLESS MINUTES PASSED . . . THEN THE GERMANS TRIED A NEW APPROACH. BUT THE UNSEEN BRITISH SNIPER HAD COMPLETE COMMAND AND PICKED THEM OFF WITH DEADLY ACCURACY.



THAT ENGLANDER HAS OUR RANGE TO A YARD!

THIS IS SUICIDE, HANS! WE'D BETTER REPORT BACK.

THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE GERMAN ENGINEERS RAGED AT THE DELAY BUT THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING HE COULD DO . . . EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD TAKE MORE INVALUABLE TIME . . .



THE SWINE IS UP ON THAT KNOB, SOMEWHERE. SEND A PATROL ACROSS THE RIVER TO GET HIM . . . AND QUICK!

## Close Range

59

WHEN THE RUBBER RAFTS WERE OBTAINED, A PARTY OF GERMANS BEGAN TO CROSS THE RIVER AT A POINT THAT WAS OUT OF SIGHT OF THE SNIPER ON THE KNOB . . .



NOT FOR A MOMENT HAD DAVE DARED TO RELAX HIS HAWKLIKE WATCH ON THE BRIDGE AND THE FIRST HE KNEW OF HIS OWN PERIL WAS WHEN A LINE OF MEN ROSE UP FROM THE GROUND NOT TWENTY YARDS AWAY AND RUSHED AT HIM.



## Close Range

FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THE MURDEROUS ACCURACY OF THE BRITISH SNIPER'S SHOOTING KEPT THEM AT BAY . . . BUT THEN THEY BEGAN TO HURL GRENADES AT HIM.



ONE, MORE ACCURATE THAN THE OTHERS, EXPLODED NEAR ENOUGH TO STUN HIM MOMENTARILY . . . AND IN THOSE SECONDS THE GERMANS WERE ON HIM . . .



## Close Range

DISPIRITED AND STILL DAZED FROM THE EXPLOSION, DAVE WAS ROUGHLY HUSTLED DOWN TO THE RIVER.



TWENTY MILES AWAY, THE GERMAN CORPS COMMANDER WAS HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BRIDGE AT BUCY.

COUNTERMAND IMMEDIATELY THE ORDER FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BUCY-LE-BOIS BRIDGE. I HAVE A NEW PLAN, GENTLEMEN!



## Close Range

BOLDNESS . . . AND A CUNNING MIND . . . HAD MADE GENERAL MUELLER FAMOUS.

WE WILL MAKE A FEINT WITHDRAWAL, AND LET THE ENEMY ESTABLISH THE SMALL BRIDGEHEAD HE HOPES FOR. THEN WHEN HE EXPLOITS IT WITH AN ARMOURED COLUMN, WE SHALL DESTROY THEM IN AMBUSH IN THE RAVINE! I WANT BOTH SIDES OF THE RAVINE THICK WITH ANTI-TANK GUNS . . . COMPLETELY HIDDEN!



WITHIN THIRTY MINUTES OF HIS CAPTURE, DAVE WAS BEING QUESTIONED . . .

I HAVE GIVEN YOU MY NAME AND MY UNIT, SIR. I KNOW NOTHING OF THE OPERATIONS PLANNED.



NO BULLYING OR CAJOLING COULD BREAK THE BRITISH SERGEANT'S STUBBORN SILENCE.

THE GERMAN GAVE UP AND DAVE WAS MARCHED ALONG THE ROAD TO A HASTILY-BUILT, TEMPORARY COMPOUND NEARBY. FROM THERE, HE SAW THE ENEMY BEGIN TO HAUL ANTI-TANK GUNS UP THE RAVINE SIDE INTO A RIDGE OF TREES.



HELLO, WHAT ARE THEY UP TO? DOESN'T LOOK AS IF THEY'RE WITHDRAWING.

## Close Range

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AS TIME PASSED, STILL MORE GUNS WERE BROUGHT UP, UNTIL THE SIDES OF THE RAVINE WERE LIKE WELL CAMOUFLAGED ARTILLERY PARKS.



NO OPPORTUNITY OF ESCAPE PRESENTED ITSELF AND THAT EVENING, DAVE AND THE OTHER PRISONERS WERE LOADED ON TO A LORRY . . .



## Close Range

THE LORRY RATTLED AND BANGED OVER THE RUTTED ROAD IN THE BRIGHT MOONLIGHT, BUT BEFORE IT HAD GONE FAR THE NIGHT WAS FILLED WITH THE ROAR OF AIRCRAFT AND R.A.F. ROCKET TYPHOONS SCREAMED OVERHEAD . . .



THE TERRIBLE ROCKET PROJECTILES STREAKED INTO THE CONVOY AND IN A MATTER OF SECONDS THE ROAD WAS A SHAMBLES. TRUCKS WERE GOING UP IN FLAMES AND PILING INTO EACH OTHER, AND MEN WERE YELLING IN A WILD BEDLAM.



DAVE WAS LIGHTNING SWIFT TO SEIZE THIS CHANCE. AS THE GUARDS PANICKED AND RACED TO THE ROADSIDE FOR COVER, DAVE LEAPED FROM THE BACK OF THE TRUCK . . .



A RED-HOT STAB OF PAIN SHOT THROUGH HIS WEAK ANKLE AS HE HIT THE GROUND, SLOWING HIM DOWN. ONE OF THE GUARDS SENSED HIS INTENTION AND RUSHED ACROSS TO CUT HIM OFF.



## Close Range

VICIOUS STABS OF PAIN LANCED THROUGH DAVE'S INJURED ANKLE AS HE DASHED INTO THE THICK UNDERGROWTH AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. HE LAY THERE FOR A FEW MOMENTS, BANTING LIKE A HUNTED HARE, AND HE KNEW WHAT HE HAD TO DO.



DAVE DARE NOT REST FOR LONG BUT WHEN HE DID MOVE OFF, HE FOUND THE WOODS STIFF WITH GERMANS. AS HE SLIPPED BEHIND A TREE TO AVOID A LONE GERMAN OFFICER, A SUDDEN CRAZY THOUGHT MADE HIM CALL SHARPLY IN GERMAN . . .



PUZZLED, THE GERMAN STRODE OVER, PEERING AROUND FOR THE OWNER OF THE VOICE. NEXT MOMENT, A HUMAN TORNADO SPRANG FROM THE BUSHES AND BEFORE THE OFFICER COULD UTTER A SHOUT OF ALARM, AN IRON-HARD FIST THUDDED AGAINST HIS CHIN.



## Close Range

WORKING FRANTICALLY FAST, 'SERGEANT GAULT' STRIPPED THE GERMAN OF HIS WELL-TAILORED UNIFORM AND FORCED HIS OWN MUSCULAR FRAME INTO IT . . .



HIS HEART HAMMERING LOUDLY  
BENEATH THE FIELD GREY TUNIC, DANE  
ACKNOWLEDGED A SALUTE FROM A  
FELDWEBEL OF ARTILLERY AS HE  
NEARED THE GERMAN OUTPOST LINE. . .



## Close Range



MEANWHILE, DAVE'S REGIMENT, HEAVILY REINFORCED, HAD FOUND THE BUCY BRIDGE INTACT, AND BY DAWN HAD HURRIEDLY PUSHED FORWARD AN OUTPOST SCREEN TO HOLD A BRIDGEHEAD ON THE GERMAN SIDE .

WE WERE LUCKY TO GET THE BRIDGE INTACT. THE HUNS HAVE LEFT A FAIRLY STRONG REARGUARD, BUT IT WON'T STOP THE CANADIAN ARMOURED DIV WHEN THEY CROSS THE RIVER LATER THIS MORNING.



## Chapter 4. TARGET FOR VENGEANCE



AS A SNIPER, JACK CALSHOTT HAD CRAWLED OUT INTO NO-MAN'S-LAND FAR AHEAD OF THE BRITISH OUTPOSTS. THERE HE LAY, MOTIONLESS AND DEADLY LIKE A COILED RATTLESNAKE WAITING FOR HIS QUARRY!



## Close Range

CALSHOTT'S WERE NOT THE ONLY EYES ON THE RUNNING FIGURE . . . A GERMAN SPANDAU SQUAD HAD ALSO SEEN DAVE BREAKING FROM COVER . . .



IN THOSE FEW SECONDS, DAVE HAD REACHED A FOLD IN THE GROUND, CLOSE ENOUGH FOR THE SNIPER TO RECOGNISE HIM. A GASP OF INCREDOULOUS ASTONISHMENT CAME FROM CALSHOTT . . .



THE MUZZLE OF THE RIFLE LIFTED . . . THE CROSS HAIRS IN THE TELESCOPIC SIGHTS WERE ROCK-STeady ON THE TARGET. A SQUEEZE OF THE TRIGGER AND HIS BROTHER'S BETRAYER WAS DEAD . . . WHO WOULD BLAME HIM IF HE SHOT GAULT NOW, FOR THE SERGEANT WAS IN GERMAN UNIFORM.



DAVE'S LIFE HUNG FOR A FRACTION OF A SECOND ON A THREAD BUT CALSHOTT FOUND HE COULD NOT MURDER A MAN. WITH A MUTTERED IMPRECACTION, HE SCRAMBLED TO HIS FEET . . .

WHAT ARE  
YOU DOING IN THAT  
GET-UP, GAULT? WHAT  
GAME ARE YOU  
PLAYING NOW?



## Close Range

BEFORE DAVE COULD UTTER A WORD, THE DISTANT SPANDAU CLATTERED INTO LIFE AND BULLETS SENT HIM DIVING FOR COVER. CALSHOTT DID NOT MOVE FAST ENOUGH . . .



REGARDLESS OF THE SHOTS RIPPING THE GROUND ABOUT HIM, DAVE DRAGGED CALSHOTT INTO COVER. BUT EVEN AS HE DID SO, HE SAW A GERMAN PATROL MOVING IN . . .



DESPERATELY HAULING HIS SENSELESS BURDEN INTO DEEPER COVER, DAVE HAD A SUDDEN SPINE-CHILLING THOUGHT. HE WAS WEARING A GERMAN UNIFORM . . . IF HE WAS CAPTURED, HE WOULD BE TREATED AS A SPY!



IT WAS DAVE'S TURN TO BE TORMENTED BY A WHISPERED TEMPTATION. ON HIS OWN HE COULD ELUDE THE SMALL GERMAN PATROL . . . IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE HE WAS HAMPERED BY CALSHOTT THAT HE COULD NOT BEAT THEM.



AT THAT MOMENT CALSHOTT'S EYES OPENED AND HE GAVE A SARDONIC GRIN. THE OLD BITTERNESS WAS STILL IN HIS VOICE AS HE TAUNTED DAVE . . .



## Close Range

DAVE DID NOT ANSWER AND THE SNIPER SLUMPED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS AGAIN. A FEW MINUTES LATER, A GERMAN MARKSMAN GOT THE DISGUISED ENGLISHMAN FOR AN INSTANT IN HIS SIGHTS. DAVE STAGGERED AND ALMOST FELL AS A BULLET HIT HIS LEG . . .



HE SPUN ROUND, GRABBING THE RIFLE FROM HIS SHOULDER. THROUGH A GAP IN THE HEDGE, HE COULD SEE THE GERMAN PATROL RACING TOWARDS HIS HIDING-PLACE.



DAVE DREW THE LUGER, SAW THE SAFETY CATCH WAS OFF, AND LAID IT CLOSE AT HAND. THEN HE RAISED THE RIFLE AND COOLLY AND STEADILY DREW A BEAD ON THE LEADING GERMAN. THERE WAS NO TIME FOR MISTAKES . . . EVERY SHOT MUST BE DEADLY ACCURATE.



AFTER THAT FIRST REVEALING SHOT, DAVE'S ONLY HOPE WAS SPEED. HE PUMPED OUT THREE MORE SHOTS AS FAST AS HE COULD WORK THE BOLT. . . .



FOUR GERMANS WERE DOWN . . . BUT THE FIFTH GERMAN WAS ALMOST ON HIM. THERE WAS NO TIME FOR DAVE TO SLAM ANOTHER ROUND INTO THE BREECH. . . HE SNATCHED UP THE LUGER AND FIRED POINT-BLANK . . .



## Close Range

HIS FACE A TIGHT-DRAWN MASK OF PAIN, DAVE WENT BACK TO CALSHOTT AND DRAGGED HIM, YARD BY YARD, TOWARDS THE BRITISH OUTPOSTS. HIS STRENGTH HAD ALMOST GIVEN OUT WHEN THE CREW OF A BREN-GUN SAW THE WOUNDED MEN AND RUSHED OUT TO HELP THEM . . .



SAFELY BACK IN A FIRST AID POST, DAVE APPEALED URGENTLY TO THE PUZZLED MEDICAL ORDERLIES . . .

NEVER MIND FURTHER TREATMENT . . . GET ME TO BATTALION HEADQUARTERS! IF YOU WON'T TAKE ME, I'LL GET UP AND WALK!

ALL RIGHT, CHUM . . . KEEP YOUR HAIR ON!





TORN BY DOUBT, THE COLONEL DISCUSSED THE AFFAIR WITH HIS ADJUTANT.

THIS IS THE POINT, FIELDING — THE CANADIAN ARMOURED COLUMN IS DUE TO CROSS THE RIVER IN A MATTER OF MINUTES. NO TIME TO CHECK GAULT'S STORY. BUT IF WE HALT THAT COLUMN, AND LATER IT'S FOUND THERE IS NO TANK-TRAP, THE TIME-TABLE WILL HAVE BEEN WRECKED FOR NOTHING!



## Close Range



DAVE HAD OVERHEARD AND IN DESPERATION, HE FORCED HIMSELF TO HIS FEET AND STAGGERED TO THE OPENING OF THE TENT.



## Close Range

DON'T LET THIS STUFF ABOUT GAULT'S RECORD DECIDE YOU, SIR, BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS — I'M NOT SERGEANT GAULT! EVERY WORD I'VE SAID IS TRUE. YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME, SIR!



ON THE POINT OF COLLAPSE, DAVE GASPED OUT THE WHOLE STORY WHILE THE TWO HARDENED SOLDIERS LISTENED IN GROWING AMAZEMENT. AT THE END, THE WOUNDED MAN CRUMPLED LIMPLY TO THE GROUND.

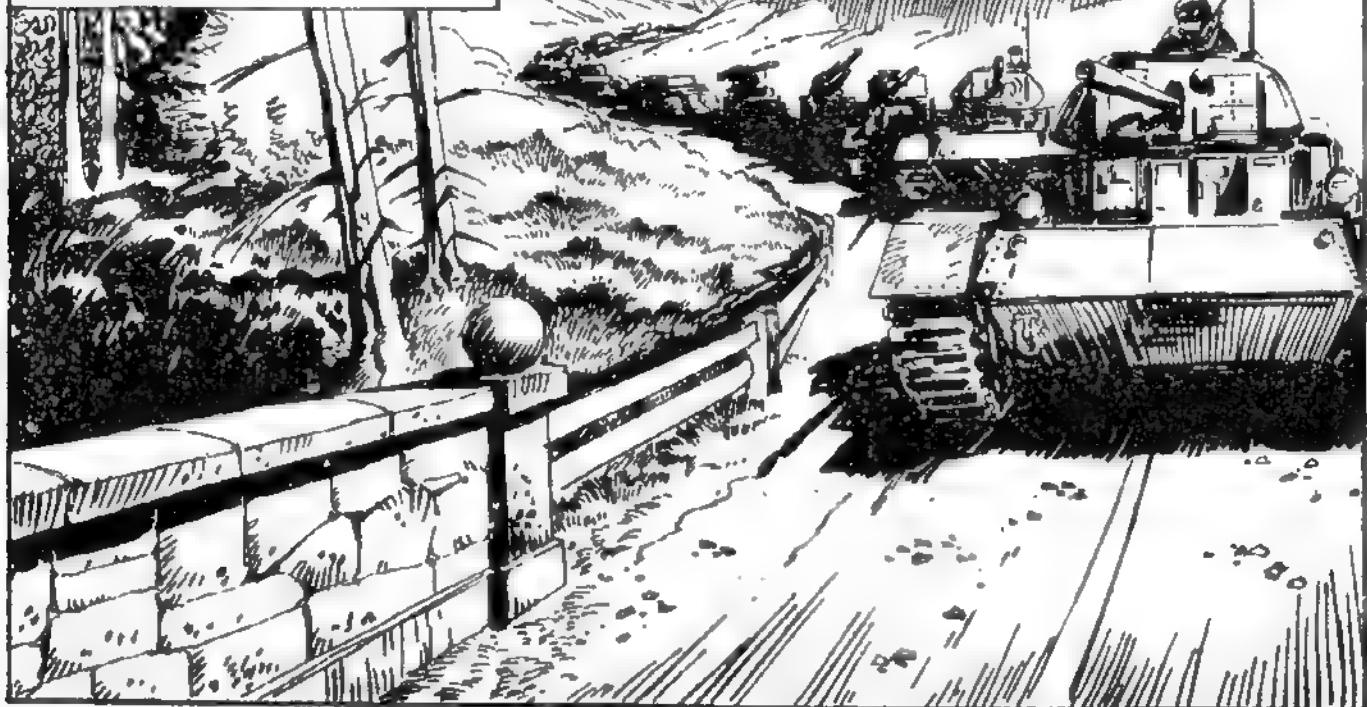
GET ME CORPS HEADQUARTERS!



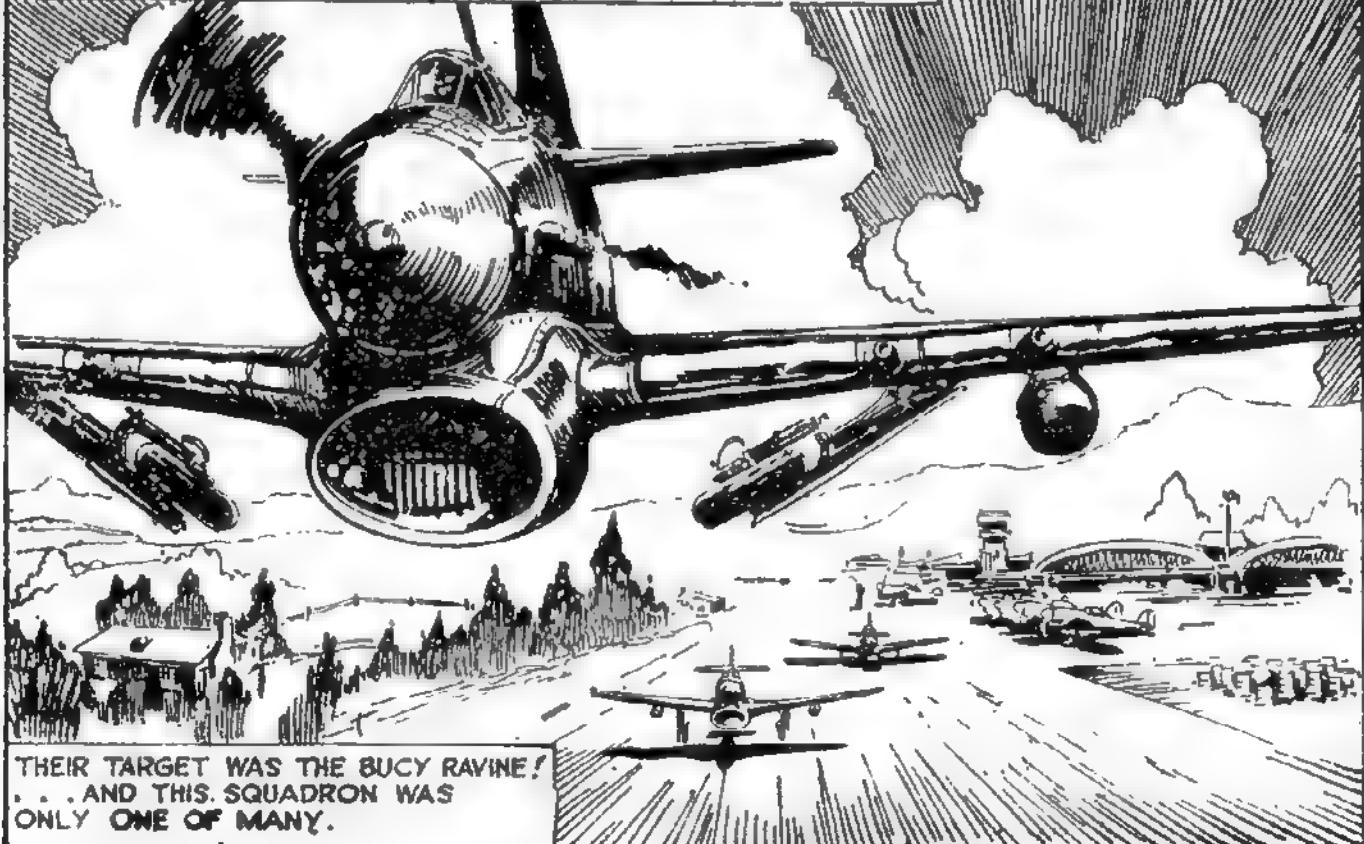
## Close Range

THE LEADING TANKS OF THE CANADIAN ARMOURED DIVISION WERE ABOUT TO LUMBER ON TO THE BRIDGE LEADING INTO THE NAZI TRAP, WHEN THE ORDER TO HALT CAME THROUGH ON THE RADIO.

STOP YOUR ENGINE, DRIVER - WE'VE GOT TO WAIT FOR THE TYPHOON BOYS TO PUT IN A STRIKE ON THE RAVINE. YEAH, MAYBE WE ARE WASTING TIME, BUT I'M NOT THE CORPS COMMANDER, AM I?



BACK ON THE ALLIED AIRFIELD AT COUDRAY, THE TYPHOON FIGHTER BOMBERS ROARED OFF THE RUNWAY.



FOR MANY OF THE GERMAN GUNNERS WAITING FOR THEIR PREY IN THE WOODS BEYOND BUCY-LE-BOIS THE LAST THING THEY EVER HEARD WAS THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF AIRCRAFT DIVING ON THEM AT FIVE HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR.



## Close Range

THE RAVINE BECAME AN INFERNO OF STUPEFYING EXPLOSIONS AND FLYING PIECES OF SHATTERED GUNS. THE CONCENTRATION OF ENEMY ARTILLERY WAS POUNDED INTO USELESS SCRAP-IRON.



AND AS THE DRONE OF TYPHOON ENGINES DIED INTO THE WESTERN SKY, BUCY RAVINE WAS A DEVASTATED GRAVEYARD OF MEN AND GUNS . . .



## Close Range

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TWENTY MINUTES LATER THERE WAS NOT EVEN A FEEBLE RESISTANCE TO THE CANADIAN ARMOUR AS IT CLATTERED NOISILY THROUGH THE RAVINE. THE VITAL BREAK-THROUGH HAD BEGUN.



BACK AT BATTALION H.Q. WHERE THE WOUNDED WERE WAITING TO BE EVACUATED, JACK CALSHOTT ASKED FOR HIS STRETCHER TO BE PLACED ALONGSIDE DAVE'S.

DIDN'T GET AROUND TO THANKING YOU BEFORE, CHUM, FOR WHAT YOU DID FOR ME . . . GLAD YOU TURNED OUT NOT TO BE GAULY . . . AND I HOPE WE GET TOGETHER AGAIN!



## Close Range

DAVE'S ULTIMATE FATE WAS DECIDED WHEN THE COMMANDER OF THE CANADIAN ARMOURED DIV HAD AN INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE ARMY COMMANDER, AT THE LATTER'S CHATEAU H.Q.



DON'T WORRY. I'M  
INTERESTING MYSELF PERSONALLY  
IN THIS MAN'S CASE... HE'S  
FAR TOO GOOD FIGHTING  
MATERIAL TO BE WASTED  
IN A GLASSHOUSE... OR  
A NON-COMBATANT  
UNIT!



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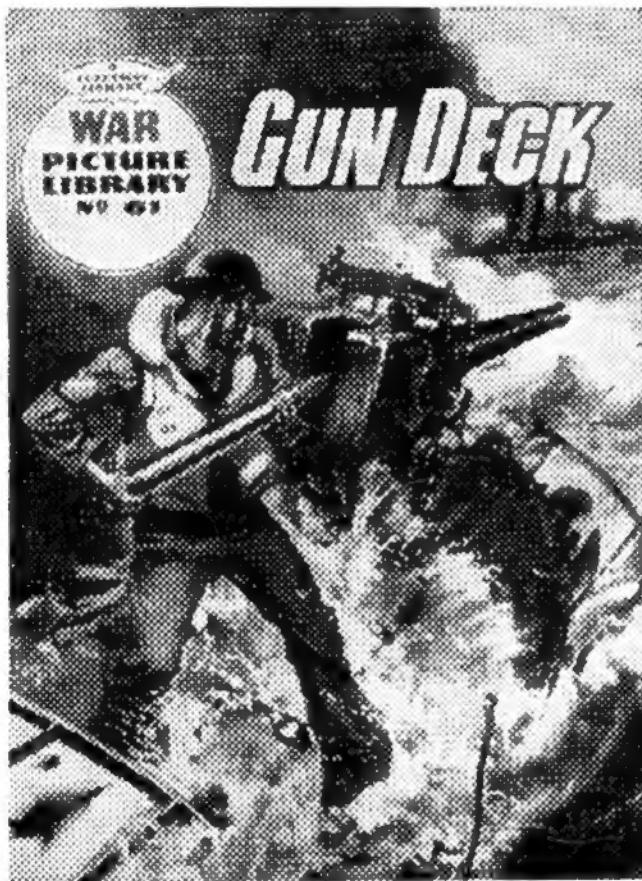
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